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## Former Interns Return to IWU as Recruiters

Kim Hill

*Illinois Wesleyan University*

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## Former Interns Return to IWU as Recruiters

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BLOOMINGTON, Ill.— Each year a large percentage of Illinois Wesleyan University alumni represent their employers at the University's Internship Fair. A few alumni, however, hold special distinction – new employees who were interns themselves just a few years or even months ago.

These interns-to-employees represent the new normal in staffing and recruitment. The primary focus of most employers' internship programs is to convert students into full-time, entry-level employees, according to the **2015 Internship & Co-op Survey** by the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE). For example, between 70 and 80 percent of new hires at companies like Facebook, Enterprise Rent-A-Car and eBay come through their internship programs, compared to about half or even less just a decade ago.

Natalie Enda '14 said that strategy unfolds as well at smaller companies such as her employer, The Horton Group, a privately held insurance broker employing around 300 people. "We hope to pipeline all of our intern opportunities into full-time positions," said Enda, a human resources assistant. "An internship is essentially a three-month job interview to get people trained and really engrossed in what it's like to work at Horton."

Enda is also a former intern. After graduating with a major in **Hispanic Studies**, Enda contacted Katie (Simpkins) Cummins '05, Horton's director of human resources, who offered advice about entering the HR field. Cummins then offered Enda a paid internship in HR in summer 2014.



International business major Huyen Nguyen '17 talks with alumnus Fred Thompson '12.



Jordan Collins '15, a PATH Crisis Center employee, recruits IWU students for his former internship position.

"It was a great opportunity for me to try out the field of human resources and a chance to showcase my skills," said Enda, who started her full-time position in January 2015.

Those skills – critical thinking, excellent verbal and written communication, creative researching and processing of information – are the hallmarks of a **liberal arts education and valued highly by employers**. The NACE Internship & Co-op Survey found that employers most highly regard the following skills: the ability to work in a team, the ability to obtain and process information, and decision-making/problem-solving skills.

Jordan Collins '15 said that the problem-solving skills he honed at Illinois Wesleyan allowed him to excel in his internship at PATH Crisis Center in Bloomington. A psychology major, Collins interned at PATH for nearly a

year before the nonprofit organization offered him a full-time position just before he graduated. His experience illustrates a national trend as reported by NACE: paid internships are more likely to lead to job offers.

Collins said the close relationships he developed with **Hart Career Center** staff, faculty such as his advisor Associate Professor of **Psychology** Linda Kunce, and others on campus prepared him for his first foray into the professional world. "When I came to the Internship Fair two years ago (as a student), I felt I'd spent a lot of time preparing — from getting advice on what to wear, how to get information, and how to present myself — to trying not to stress about it too much," Collins recalled. "I ended up getting the paid internship at PATH, worked hard to learn and excel there, and now here I am working full time. All my hard work paid off in the end."

**More than 70 percent** of Illinois Wesleyan University students have held at least one internship by the time they graduate, according to the most recent data, an upward trend as evidenced by the more than 250 current students attending the recent Internship Fair.